

**THE CHICAGO AND PHILADELPHIA
SERVICE-LEARNING INITIATIVES:
EXAMINING POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

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July 2000

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ABSTRACT

THE CHICAGO AND PHILADELPHIA SERVICE-LEARNING INITIATIVES: EXAMINING POLICIES AND PRACTICES

THE PROJECT

Beth Swanson conducted a qualitative analysis of the service-learning initiatives in the Philadelphia and Chicago Public School Districts. Her study provides a comparison of the requirements (e.g., requirement design and implementation), highlights the effective service-learning practices within both school districts and provides insight into the quality of the current school-based programs. Swanson also outlines policy considerations regarding mandatory service-learning and provides recommendations for future service-learning policies and programs.

THE FINDINGS OR RESULTS

- Chicago Public Schools have primarily designed and implemented a “community service” requirement, rather than service-learning
- The School District of Philadelphia has established a solid service-learning policy and has begun to reap some quality results.
- Six basic models of school-based service-learning can be found within the “best practice” high schools of Chicago and Philadelphia: single course, single discipline, multi-disciplinary, elective course, service club and individual project.
- Five “base elements” have been identified as necessary to build quality school-based service-learning programs: a commitment to service-learning, intentional learning objectives, the service project must address a real community need, reflection, and collaboration.
- Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are playing a critical role in the development, implementation and evaluation of service-learning programs across the country. The service-learning field needs to define and understand the roles of CBOs and provide the appropriate support, training and funding.
- Top-down, blanket policies, such as requiring students to serve, have yet to produce high quality programs. Rather than continue this trend, schools should be given the option to develop and implement service-learning policies that are appropriate to their respective communities.

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

Swanson intended the study to provide policymakers, administrators and teachers with practical information regarding the design and implementation of service-learning policies. Through the analyses of the Chicago and Philadelphia requirements, Swanson provides insight into the potential outcomes of such policies, examples of effective school-based programs, service-learning integration models, and policy recommendations for the future. The report also provides educators (grades 9-12) with valuable service-learning resources.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT RATIONALE

In September 1999, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 83% of public high schools had students participating in community service activities and approximately 46% of those high schools had students participating in service-learning activities. Within the last decade, high schools have demonstrated phenomenal growth in the area of service. In fact, the number of high school students involved in service related programs increased 686% between 1994 and 1997.¹ The majority of high schools encourage service activity through volunteer programs, extra-curricular activities and individual academic classes. However, a growing number of high schools, school districts, and even states, are implementing service requirements, which students must complete in order to graduate.

Requiring students to serve their communities is not a new idea, particularly in large urban areas. Ten years ago Atlanta, Georgia implemented a service requirement and Washington, DC soon followed with a similar requirement. By 1997, 18% of public school districts reported having service requirements for their high school students.² Now, as service-learning gains more prominence in the education field, other urban areas, such as Baltimore, Oakland, Philadelphia and Chicago, are adopting similar requirements. This influx in requiring student participation in community service and/or service-learning activities has generated much debate in the fields of service, education, and social policy.

The purpose of this report is to discuss the successes and challenges of the service-learning requirements of Chicago and Philadelphia. Although the districts share similar goals and missions, the design and implementation of the two requirements are very different. The research outlines and compares the design and implementation of the service-learning requirements of Chicago and Philadelphia, as well as identifies effective programs that are succeeding within these ground-breaking initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher comes from a background of school-based and community-based service-learning programming. This study emerged from her work within Chicago public high schools, during the first year of implementation of the service-learning graduation requirement. By designing a qualitative and comparative study, the researcher set out to explore the processes and programs within district-wide service-learning policies.

Qualitative research allows in-depth analysis of complex subjects (e.g. Chicago Public Schools and the School District of Philadelphia). Through semi-structured, open-ended

¹ Robert Shumer and Charles Cook, *The Status of Service-Learning in the United States: Some Facts and Figures*. (St. Paul, MN: National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 1999).

² Ibid.

interviews, the researcher was able to explore the implementation and outcomes of the service-learning initiatives, which can not "be fully captured and measured on standardized scales."³ The researcher then used inductive analysis to organize the data and assemble the final report.⁴

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study include 6 school district administrators who are responsible for directing the district service-learning policy, 10 service-learning coordinators who oversee either the service-learning programs within a specific school or a certain region within the school district, 26 high school teachers who are involved in school-based service-learning initiatives, and 10 community-based service-learning professionals who partner with numerous schools to coordinate service-learning programs. There were a total of 52 participants.

INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The interview questions were developed from three sources: 1) the Essential Elements of Service-Learning, 2) the researcher's professional experience with service-learning and 3) the information the researcher wanted to gain regarding school-based service-learning requirements. The interview questions were reviewed by numerous service-learning practitioners and pilot interviews were conducted with three Chicago Public School high school teachers. The recommendations of both the selected reviews and teachers were incorporated into the final interview protocol.

METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

Data for this report include interviews with district and school administrators, service-learning coordinators, teachers and community-based staff, as well as site visits to ten schools. The ten "best practices" schools were selected by the participating school districts (Appendix A). The Director of Service-Learning, in both Chicago and Philadelphia, selected five schools that, in the opinion of the district service-learning office, represented the exemplary service-learning programs within the school district. The service-learning coordinators of the schools were interviewed and asked to recommend three teachers within their school who were currently involved with service-learning programs. While three teacher recommendations were requested by each coordinator, some schools could offer only one or two teachers that were currently involved in service-learning projects.⁵ The initial interviews of Philadelphia personnel were conducted via telephone; however, in-person follow-up interviews were also completed during the site visits to Philadelphia schools. Chicago-based interviews were all conducted on site.

³ Michael Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research*. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990) 102.

⁴ Egon Guba, *Toward a Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation*. (Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Evaluation, 1978) 390.

⁵ The service-learning policies of Chicago and Philadelphia are only in their second year of implementation. Most schools report a low number of teachers currently involved with service-learning activities.

The interviews consisted of a series of questions, regarding the respective service-learning requirement, and focused on five basic topic areas: management, resources, service experience, evaluation and impacts (Appendix B). Participants were encouraged to share their successes and challenges with service-learning, as well as strategies used to address those identified challenges.

FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Chicago Public Schools have primarily designed and implemented a “community service” requirement, rather than service-learning.
2. The School District of Philadelphia has established a solid service-learning policy and has begun to reap some quality results.
3. Six basic models of service-learning can be found within the “best practice” high schools of Chicago and Philadelphia. These models offer schools and districts various strategies to integrate service-learning into their community.
4. Five “base elements” have been identified as necessary to build quality school-based service-learning programs: a commitment to service-learning, intentional learning objectives, the service project must address a real community need, reflection, and collaboration.
5. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are playing a critical role in the development, implementation and evaluation of service-learning programs across the country. Whether the policy involves community service or service-learning, schools are depending on community partners to make their initiatives successful. The service-learning field needs to define and understand the roles of CBOs and provide the appropriate support, training and funding.
6. Service-learning challenges the traditional notions of teaching and learning. Matters such as class scheduling, standardized testing and curriculum constraints will be contested when a school or district implements a service-learning initiative. For policies and programs to be truly successful there will need to be a larger educational reform effort within the public schools.
7. Service-learning policies need to be about process, not replication. Successful service-learning strategies, both in policy and practice, should be shared throughout the field. However, these strategies should act as a guide for schools and communities, rather than a prescription for service.
8. Top-down, blanket policies, such as requiring students to serve, have yet to produce high quality programs. Rather than continue this trend, schools should be given the option to develop and implement service-learning policies that are appropriate to their respective communities.

OVERVIEW

SERVICE-LEARNING REQUIREMENTS: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

SERVICE-LEARNING POLICIES	
CHICAGO	PHILADELPHIA
High School students must complete a minimum of 40 hours of Service Learning activities prior to graduation.	Students must complete a project that demonstrates citizenship through service learning for promotion to grades 5 and 9, and for graduation from high school.

MANAGEMENT	
CHICAGO	PHILADELPHIA
<p><i>STAFFING STRUCTURE</i></p> <p>CPS SERVICE LEARNING OFFICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Part-time Coordinator • 1 Part-time support staff • 1 Advisor to the program: High School Development Officer <p>SERVICE LEARNING COACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1 at each high school <p>SERVICE LEARNING TEAM (encouraged)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A team is a group of faculty and staff interested and committed to service-learning • A team is encouraged to form within each high school <p>TEACHER-MENTOR (encouraged)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A teacher-mentor guides individuals or groups of students through projects • Students request a teacher-mentor on an individual basis 	<p><i>STAFFING STRUCTURE</i></p> <p>DISTRICT SERVICE LEARNING OFFICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Full-time Director • 2 Full-time “Master Teachers” • 2 Full-time PSRCs that provide training and technical assistance for the district (see below) • 1 Part-time PSRC to focus on special education teachers/students • 1 Program Assistant <p>POST SECONDARY RESOURCE COORDINATOR (PSRC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in each cluster • Part of the PSRC’s responsibilities is to be the coordinator of service-learning for the cluster <p>RESOURCE BOARD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in each cluster • The board identifies resources/ supports initiative

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM BINDER (distributed to each Coach)

1. Introducing Service Learning Packet

- Service Learning Overview
- Requirement Summary
- The Service Learning Team Overview
- Current Chicago Public Schools Service Learning Activities
- Ideas for Service Learning Activities
- Liability, Indemnity, and Safety Issues

2. Coach's Kit

- Program Overview
- The Service Learning Team Overview
- Recruiting and Inspiring Faculty
- Recruiting Committed Students
- Suggested time-line for project completion
- Building Relationships with Service Agencies and Organizations
- Planning Educational Service Learning Projects
- Seven Essential Components of Service Learning
- Ideas for Service Learning Projects
- Service Learning Reflection

3. Agencies

- List of Service Learning Agency Partners

4. Forms and Reports

- Service Learning Agreement
- Service Learning Time Sheet
- Service Learning Site Preference
- Service Learning Evaluation by Student
- Service Learning Evaluation by Agency

LEAD TEACHERS

- Lead Teachers are advocates and resource people for the service-learning initiative
- There are approximately 25 Lead Teachers within the District

PROJECT MENTOR

- Each project is assigned a mentor
- Assigned to each student by the cluster Service Learning Coordinator and dependent on the student's topic

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS: GUIDELINES IN PROGRESS (1999-2000)

- Requirement Summary
- Project Criteria Fact Sheet
- Project-Centered Learning Overview
- Student and Teacher Responsibilities
- Small Learning Communities (SLC) Responsibilities
- Facilitation Guide for Projects
- Sample Project Plan
- Project Criteria Checklist
- Project Assessment Guide with Performance Indicators
- **Supplements to Guidelines:**
 - Project and Policy Clarifications
 - Project "Tip Sheet"

OTHER

- CD-ROM of Education Standards: helps teachers align service projects with course curriculum

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Learning Verification of Completion 	
5. Resources and Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of publications and web sites 	

EVALUATION	
CHICAGO	PHILADELPHIA
<p align="center"><i>PROJECT ASSESSMENT</i></p> <p>SERVICE LEARNING VERIFICATION OF COMPLETION FORM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed by coach and teacher-mentor (if student has a teacher-mentor) <p>SERVICE LEARNING TIME SHEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed by students; signed by coach <p align="center"><i>INITIATIVE ASSESSMENT</i></p> <p>DOCUMENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Learning Evaluation by Student • Service Learning Evaluation by Agency <p>FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE EVALUATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted by Dr. Joseph Kahne, Mills College, focusing on the first year of requirement implementation 	<p align="center"><i>PROJECT ASSESSMENT</i></p> <p>PORTFOLIO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students document their projects through the creation of portfolios <p>ASSESSMENT TEAM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team of at least 2 teachers evaluates and grades student projects <p>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District has created performance indicators to be used to evaluate each project and guide the grading process <p align="center"><i>INITIATIVE ASSESSMENT</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently being developed

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	
CHICAGO	PHILADELPHIA
<p>INITIAL SERVICE LEARNING COACH MEETING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of requirement and role of “Coach” <p>ANNUAL SERVICE LEARNING CONFERENCE</p>	<p>SUMMER INSTITUTES , 1998 AND 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 teachers attend each institute • One week extensive training regarding service learning and new Philadelphia requirement. • Roles and responsibilities outlined

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 teachers attend • One day conference to share effective service learning programs/strategies. • Partner with Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC) • Held spring of 1999 and 2000. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous community partners participate in trainings <p>WEEKEND TRAININGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted by District staff and teachers • Address various service-learning topics <p>FACULTY TRAININGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted by District staff and teachers • Periodic trainings at schools for interested educators <p>OTHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Office available for T/TA. (e.g. staff visits to schools and classrooms, and hold teacher trainings when requested.) • Community-based organizations, partnered with schools, provide teacher and student trainings.
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COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS	
CHICAGO	PHILADELPHIA
<p>SERVICE LEARNING AGENCY PARTNERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 150 agencies have identified themselves as potential partners for Chicago High Schools. Schools are given contact information and coaches and/or students are responsible for contacting organizations and developing partnerships. 	<p>DISTRICT SERVICE LEARNING PARTNERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners named at the inception of the graduation requirement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Year Philadelphia • National School and Community Corps • Institute for Service Learning • University of Pennsylvania • Center for Greater Philadelphia • 30+ (only a partial list has been published) “Community Partner and Technical Assistance Organizations” have been identified to work with Philadelphia schools. <p>SCHOOL PARTNERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cluster coordinators (with the help of their Resource Board) are responsible for identifying community-based organizations and coordinating community partnerships between organizations and schools. • Teachers are <i>encouraged</i> to identify and coordinate partnerships to enhance their classroom projects.

	RESOURCE BOARDS Assist with the development of service learning opportunities and the identification of resources. There is one Resource Board in each cluster.
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FUNDING	
CHICAGO	PHILADELPHIA
CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$260,000 Learn and Serve America grant, subgranted through the Illinois State Board of Education (1999-2000) • Schools/teachers responsible for securing additional funds through other grants 	CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$100,000 Learn and Serve America • Schools/teachers responsible for securing additional funds through other grants

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SERVICE-LEARNING REQUIREMENT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 1997, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) initiated a district-wide service-learning requirement for students in grades 9-12. Students are required, beginning with the class of 2001 (sophomores in the Fall of 1998) to complete 40 hours of service in order to graduate from high school. The requirement was developed under the leadership of Carlos Azcotia, the Deputy Chief Education Officer, as a part of the CPS High School Redesign Initiative. Chicago is the largest school district in the country to require service-learning for high school graduation.

MISSION

“Service Learning will strengthen the classroom instruction of high school students in all subject areas to improve their overall academic success, and will fulfill real needs in the City of Chicago. Through their participation in hands-on, creative, and course-related projects, students will be exposed to new concepts in learning and will develop a stronger sense of social responsibility and civic awareness.”⁶

DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

In January 1998, the CPS Service-Learning Task Force was formed to review the “draft” of the service learning requirement. The task force consisted of 45 individuals representing various constituency groups including post-secondary education, community-based organizations, higher education, health care and the business sector. The task force divided itself into three committees: research, resources and guidelines. The research committee focused on existing service requirements in the United States. Information was collected from private and parochial schools in the area and the state-wide requirement in Maryland was also studied. Community organizations and community needs were identified by the resource committee. The guidelines committee created the criteria for service-learning projects and outlined the infrastructure for the initiative.

Members of the Task Force also identified and recommended specific elements, which they deemed “essential,” to be added to the service-learning requirement:

- Emphasis of service learning through classroom-based or after-school activities
- Adequate explanation of and suggested time allotment for reflection activities
- On-going staff development training for service learning coaches and teachers
- Recommendations for developing and maintaining community partnerships
- Funding a full time coordinator at each school and full-time staff at the Board
- Gradual implementation

⁶ Chicago Public Schools, Web Site (2000): <http://www.cps.edu>

Based, in part, on the recommendations of the Task Force, CPS completed the final version of the requirement, including requirement guidelines and project criteria by the summer of 1998.

The initiative required high schools to begin developing service-learning programs in the 1998 fall semester and to then implement those programs in January 1999. The guidelines also suggested that schools initially involve only 50-100 students in their service-learning programs and then plan to expand their programs in the ensuing year. Students are also encouraged to complete their 40 hour requirement in one semester-long project.

Service-learning projects are to consist of three components: preparation, action and reflection. Projects should be designed and selected to achieve academic goals, capture the interests of students, and meet real needs in the City of Chicago. It is also stated that projects may be designed by individual teachers or students may choose to work with a specific agency that interests them. Parents are also encouraged to support service-learning activities and to teach their children the “importance of social responsibility.”⁷

MANAGEMENT

Management Staff

Currently, there is one part-time coordinator and one part-time support staff member for the initiative at the District level. These staff members are responsible for the overall coordination of the initiative including administrative duties, public education and outreach, recruitment of community partners, basic technical assistance to Chicago public high schools, research of additional funding sources and fiscal management of the initiative.

In the summer of 1998, a Service Learning Coach was designated at each high school. Coaches are teachers, administrators or other qualified staff charged with the responsibility to direct the new service learning initiative at their school. The coaches earn a stipend of \$1000-\$4000 (depending on the size of their school) for their efforts.

The implementation of the CPS service-learning requirement falls mainly on the coaches, who are responsible for such tasks as recruiting faculty members and providing professional development opportunities, building community partnerships, recruiting students, monitoring projects, evaluating the program and additional administrative work.

The requirement suggests that the coaches create a “Service Learning Team,” comprising a core group of interested teachers and faculty, at their respective schools to support the implementation of the initiative. Students are also encouraged to seek out a teacher-mentor to guide them through their service learning project, particularly to help students with in-class preparation and reflection exercises. However, class time may not be used to perform the actual service activity.

⁷ *Introducing Service Learning*, (Chicago, IL: Chicago Public Schools, 1998) 5.

Management Tools

CPS created a “Service Learning Program Binder,” which acts as the service-learning coach’s primary resource. The binder offers a brief overview of service-learning and includes example projects, reflection activities, tips on building partnerships, a suggested timeline for project completion, an outline of liability issues and a list of approximately 150 community agencies that are willing to partner with schools on service-learning initiatives.

The remainder of the management tools are primarily administrative forms and reports. Students are responsible for the site preference forms, service agreements, time sheets, evaluations and service verification forms. These materials are to assist the coach in placing students at service sites, calculating the service hours students have accumulated, and assessing the students’ service experiences.

EVALUATION

Project Assessment

CPS has designed four basic tools to assess the service experience of the students: a service time sheet, a student evaluation, an agency evaluation, and a verification of project completion. The service-learning coach is responsible for collecting these materials and keeping a record of the students’ progress toward completing the 40 hours requirement.

Students are responsible for recording their service hours on a time sheet throughout the project. At the completion of the project, both the student and the partner agency fill out evaluations of the program and service experience (Appendix C and D). The students also submit a project completion form to the school coach, which is signed and verified by their teacher-mentor (Appendix E). As students accumulate service hours, the hours will be reflected on each student’s official transcript.

Although service-learning is stressed by CPS, there is no formal assessment of whether or not student service hours are spent on community service projects or service-learning projects. The teacher-mentors and coaches have been charged with the responsibility of making this determination on their own, but there are currently no district standards for the projects.

Initiative Assessment

CPS contracted Professor Joseph Kahne of Mills College, Oakland, CA (formerly of University of Illinois at Chicago), to conduct *The Chicago Public Schools Service Learning Initiative: A Formative and Summative Evaluation*, during the first year of the requirement. Data for the report included interviews and observations at ten schools, surveys completed by the service coach at each school, and surveys completed by 268 students who participated in a broad array of programs. The purpose of the evaluation was to examine whether the CPS service-learning initiative was moving in a productive direction, rather than assessing whether or not the program was fully implemented.

The evaluation concluded that the ultimate impact of the Chicago service-learning requirement cannot yet be assessed, but the “first year of the initiative appeared to be quite successful.” The initiative generated a number of new partnerships between schools and the community, and many quality service learning experiences have been created for students during the past year. The report also recommended that CPS concentrate second year efforts on teacher involvement and professional development, as well as increasing the number of student participants. “If the quantity of service-learning” programs and/or opportunity to participate in such programs “does not grow dramatically, many students’ plans for graduation may be compromised.” The challenge is for CPS to increase the number of *high-quality* service-learning opportunities. If quality programs are not maintained, the overall district service-learning initiative will most likely have little impact.

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Seventy-eight coaches were convened in June of 1998 to discuss the new service learning requirement. Community-based professionals were also in attendance, since the purpose of the meeting was to “provide coaches with a range of service-based activity ideas and to encourage them to begin partnering with community organizations to implement their school’s program.” Two additional coaches meetings were held during the 1998-1999 school year to provide them with a sense of support and updates on the initiative. In Spring, 1999, CPS organized regional coaches meetings, after receiving feedback that the full coaches meeting were too large to be helpful. Smaller regional meetings are now being held twice a year and have become a forum for the exchange of successes and challenges among the coaches.

There is no official professional development plan for teachers; however, CPS did encourage faculty to attend the State-Wide Service-Learning Conference, coordinated by the Illinois Resource Center. CPS also provided teacher release funds for participants in the First Annual High School Service Learning Conference, coordinated in conjunction with a local non-profit. During the 1999-2000 school year, CPS is focusing more energy toward supporting the teachers within the district and providing them with more resources to successfully create service-learning opportunities for their students. CPS support includes example service-learning projects and curriculums, mini-grants to assist with project costs, and during year two of the requirement (1999-2000) the District office coordinated a service-learning open house for schools and community-based organizations to meet and discuss potential partnerships.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

CPS informed Chicago community-based organizations of the new service-learning requirement and requested that the organizations designate themselves as “Service Learning Agency Partners.” Each participating agency provides CPS with information on their organization, including what service programs are offered, which

neighborhood(s) the agency serves, what (if any) age requirements the organization has for “youth volunteers,” and the number of volunteers the agency is capable of including.

There are approximately 150 Service Learning Agency Partners for the 1999-2000 school year, which are available, in varying capacities, for school partnerships. However, it is the school’s responsibility, specifically the coach’s responsibility, to form partnerships with local agencies. CPS solely provides the schools with contact and organizational information, as well as a fact sheet on building relationships with service agencies.

FUNDING

CPS receives a \$260,000 Learn & Serve America grant from the Corporation for National Service, sub-granted through the Illinois State Board of Education⁸. A majority of the funds are distributed through two types of mini-grants: School Grants and Instructional Grants. Administrators or coaches may apply for the School Grant, and may request up to \$2500, which supports the overall service-learning initiative at the school. Individual teachers or teams of teachers may apply for up to \$1500 through the Instructional Grant to support their service-learning programs in the classroom.

⁸ Funding for the 1999-2000 school year.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

SERVICE-LEARNING REQUIREMENT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

On June 29, 1998, the Board of Education for the School District of Philadelphia voted to require “Citizen Projects” (i.e. Service-Learning) for promotion to grades 5 and 9, and for graduation from high school, beginning with the class of 2002. Service-Learning is part of a larger school reform initiative in Philadelphia entitled *Children Achieving*. Under the leadership of Superintendent David Hornbeck⁹, *Children Achieving* is a twelve year “comprehensive, progressive effort to restructure the educational system” of Philadelphia. Through the formal integration of service into the curriculum, service-learning will provide students with “real world” learning, while also achieving academic standards. Philadelphia is the first public school system in the country to engage all students, grades K-12, in structured service-learning activities.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“With the inception of *Children Achieving* [1990] and our school-to-career system, we have envisioned service-learning as an engine to drive the development of citizenship and leadership skills and community building.”¹⁰ This vision, combined with the ongoing work of service-learning entities such as the Institute for Service-Learning, PennServe, and the Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, created a fertile environment for service-learning within the Philadelphia public schools. Throughout the 1990’s, Philadelphia teachers and administrators began to adopt service-learning as a teaching strategy and a service-learning agenda began to emerge, which eventually developed into the current graduation requirement.

After several years of conducting and evaluating service-learning activities in Philadelphia, the District determined that “project-based” and “problem-solving” instructional strategies are the most effective. The District reports that

Service experiences that are truly integrated into the curriculum create more powerful teaching and learning environments, build better student leaders and citizens, generate significant school-to-career exposure, and result in real quality of life improvements in schools and communities.¹¹

Service-learning was identified as an effective teaching strategy that would not only achieve the goals of *Children Achieving*, but would improve the overall quality of the

⁹ David Hornbeck resigned as Superintendent in June 2000.

¹⁰ David Hornbeck, *Service-Learning and Reform in the Philadelphia Public Schools*, Phi Delta Kappan, May 2000: 665.

¹¹ *School District of Philadelphia: Service-Learning Initiative* (Philadelphia, PA: Office of Education for Employment, 1998).

students' educational experience within the Philadelphia school system. The Service-Learning (i.e. Citizenship Projects) initiative has five basic goals:

1. To foster Pro-Active Citizenship/Leadership/Empowerment
2. To enhance academics
3. To teach school-to-career competencies
4. To build bridges between school and community
5. To improve the quality of life of the participating students

DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

Before implementing such a substantial program, the District developed a rather comprehensive infrastructure for the Service Learning initiative. The District developed assessment rubrics for the reviewing students' projects, a professional development plan for teachers, identified community partners, established relationships with numerous community organizations, and committed to the assessment and evaluation of the Service Learning initiative. The majority of this work was done by the Service Learning Advisory Committee, convened in February 1998, which was a group of 25 professionals comprising school-based faculty, community leaders and service learning advocates. The task of the Advisory Committee was to help draft the "comprehensive strategic plan for implementing" the service learning initiative. The topics the Advisory Committee addressed included:

1. Goals of Service Learning (Student Citizenship Projects)
2. Proposed Promotion/Graduation Requirements
3. Baseline Elements of a Proficient Service Learning Lesson Plan
4. Assessment of Service Learning Projects
5. Infrastructure Needs – Staffing and Technology
6. Professional Development Needs
7. Community Partner Needs
8. Collaborations
9. Budgetary Needs

The Advisory Committee also established four subcommittees to study various components of the initiative in more depth, such as Infrastructure, Professional Development, Community Partners and Curriculum.¹²

The Curriculum subcommittee outlined the key elements of high-quality service-learning projects as a guide for teachers and students participating in the initiative. These elements, the "6As," have been deemed necessary by the District in order to provide each student with a meaningful service experience.¹³

1. Authenticity
2. Academic Rigor
3. Adult Connections
4. Applied Learning

¹² *Draft of Service-Learning Strategic Plan*, (Philadelphia, PA: Office of Education for Employment, The School District of Philadelphia, 1998).

¹³ The "6A's" were developed by Adria Steinberg, and appear in *Real Learning, Real Work*, Routledge, New York, 1997.

5. Active Exploration
6. Assessment

The subcommittee also encouraged teachers to guide their students through the PARC process of preparation, action, reflection and celebration while completing their service-learning projects.

MANAGEMENT

Management Staff

The service-learning requirement for promotion and graduation is organized by the School District of Philadelphia Education for Employment Office (EfE). One full-time staff member is dedicated to directing the initiative for the District. Responsibilities include advocacy, public education, garnering of resources, strategic planning and support of the overall initiative. Two other full-time staff members work closely with the Director on developing and implementing service-learning opportunities for schools, as well as training and technical assistance.

There are two “Master Teachers,” seasoned service-learning educators, on the District staff who provide technical assistance to teachers. A majority of their time is spent with individual teachers, assisting with the development of service projects and community partnerships. One part-time employee is also dedicated to service-learning/special education initiatives.

The Philadelphia school district is organized into 22 “clusters,” each equipped with a local “resource board” which was created to identify, implement, and manage “needed services for children and youth, and to ensure that young people are prepared for work and/or further education.” To support the new service-learning requirement, each cluster now has a Post-Secondary Resource Coordinator (PSRC) to work with students, teachers, principals and resource boards to develop service opportunities and form partnerships between the schools and communities. The PSRC responsibilities include the following:

- Assisting teachers and students in identifying service partners
- Arranging and/or conducting the proper level of training for the identified partners
- Assisting teachers and students with project logistics (e.g. transportation, materials, equipment)
- Assisting with management of District-wide service-learning data base, and
- Assisting with coordination and implementation of cluster-wide, multi-school service-learning projects.

Three PSRCs also work for the District office, providing service-learning training and technical assistance to schools, in addition to their other duties.

Within each school or SLC¹⁴ “Lead Teachers” have been identified by the Service Learning Coordinator and principals to act as “champions, advocates and resource

¹⁴ All comprehensive high schools have been restructured into Small Learning Communities (SLC), which are “schools-within-a-school” taught by interdisciplinary teams of teachers serving 200-400 students in grades 9 through 12.

people” for the service-learning initiative. The Lead Teachers receive extensive training in service-learning from the District and then function as service-learning “experts” for their colleagues. Lead Teachers are also expected to conduct regular meetings to discuss the progress of the initiative, identify successes and challenges within the programs, work toward solutions for the identified challenges and recommend strategies for the professional development of other faculty. As compensation for their work, Lead Teachers receive release time, extra-curricular compensation and other incentives.

A Project Mentor is also assigned to each project to oversee the progress and completion of the project. The Project Mentor can be a faculty member or community partner and is selected based on the student’s topic and content standards. The student and Project Mentor are expected to meet regularly.

Management Tools

The District created specific project guidelines (Appendix F), outlined student and teacher responsibilities (Appendix G), and recommended a project facilitation process (Appendix H). Students may complete a project as an individual or work with a group of students on a particular issue; however, the topic of the project must be student driven. The “major portion” of student work on projects is to be completed during school hours and teachers are expected to provide time, guidance, resources and feedback for the projects whenever appropriate.

Students are also given a “sample project plan” to help focus their topic and research, as well as a “project criteria checklist” to ensure that the project meets all the criteria for successful completion (Appendix I and J).

EVALUATION

Project Assessment

All students are responsible for documenting their project, whether they have participated in an individual project or a group project, by creating a portfolio. The portfolio is intended to provide a summary of “student work, academic development and personal growth.” The portfolio will be stored with the appropriate Post Secondary Readiness Coordinator (PSRC) and will be on file throughout the duration of each student’s educational career. It is also encouraged that each service-learning project culminate in a final presentation which will allow students the opportunity to display their acquired knowledge to a public audience.

An assessment team of at least two teachers, determined by the SLC, evaluates and grades the student projects. The District has outlined “performance indicators” (Appendix K) which are used in assessing each project. Because the service learning projects are interdisciplinary and woven into the curriculum of various classes, the students are able to receive credit for the projects in each class that the project involves. Achievement of the requirement will be recorded on a student’s report card, noted by a checkmark and the grade in which the project was completed.

Initiative Assessment

A district-wide assessment of the service-learning initiative is currently being developed. Student portfolios will serve as an initial indicator of student participation, types of service projects completed and student learning. Through the use of portfolios, the District reports that approximately 25,000 K-12 students have participated in service-learning activities to date.

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The District estimates that approximately 1,200 teachers have been trained (in less than two years) in service-learning. However, the District also believes that a total of 6,000 teachers must be trained for this initiative to be a success.

These extensive professional development plans began with 300 teachers, predominantly Lead Teachers, trained by the National Youth Leadership Council in June, 1998. The training included information on the basics of service-learning and how to use it as an instructional strategy, recruitment and partnership with community organizations, the logistics of service-learning, meaningful reflection activities, service-learning assessment rubrics, and team and leadership building. After this intensive training, participants were expected to conduct similar trainings for their colleagues, including faculty members and administrators.

A second summer institute, attended by 300 teachers, was held at Temple University in 1999. Weekend trainings, as well as numerous school faculty trainings, have been scheduled throughout the 1999-2000 school year and there are more institute opportunities slated for the summer of 2000. These issue-based workshops address topics such as the environment, education, literacy, public safety, aging and community revitalization. The District is committed to providing its teachers with the training and resources needed to make service-learning a successful teaching strategy.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The School District of Philadelphia has outlined three basic roles for community partners within the new service-learning initiative: provide training and technical assistance to service-learning projects, involve students in service-learning projects at their site, and/or assist teachers with integrating service activities with their curriculums. Community partners will be recruited through a coordinated effort between students, teachers, PSRCs, and EfE Office.

The District developed community partnerships with City Year Philadelphia and the National School and Community Corps before the requirement was implemented. These community-based programs, comprising AmeriCorps members, are assisting the District to develop and implement "large scale, interdisciplinary" service-learning projects that will bring together teachers, students and community members, while aligning the various streams of service towards a common goal.

A Service-Learning Resource and Training Manual is currently being developed by the EfE office, which describes how community partners can work effectively with schools to develop projects.

FUNDING

The School District of Philadelphia receives approximately \$100,000 in Learn & Serve America funds to support the district initiative. School administrators and teachers are charged with the responsibility of securing their own funds for their service-learning projects.

SERVICE-LEARNING PRACTICES

The Chicago and Philadelphia service-learning policies were developed with similar intentions: to enrich students' educational experiences (i.e. to further engage students in their learning, with the hope of increased academic achievement) and to improve communities. Although they share similar objectives, the differences in policy design and implementation are generating very different outcomes.

To determine whether these policies are attaining the results they were intended to achieve, they have been compared to the "Eleven Essential Elements of Effective Service-Learning" created by the National Service-Learning Cooperative (NSLC). Although numerous lists regarding the essential elements of service-learning have been created (Wingspread 1989, ASLER 1995), the NSLC (1998) publication is the most current publication regarding standards for high-quality service-learning programs. As high-quality programs are the ultimate goal of both school districts, much can be learned through a comparison of the established policies, and the programs resulting from those policies¹⁵, to the eleven essential elements. The following chapter highlights the service-learning practices within both school districts and provides insight into the quality of the current school-based programs.

¹⁵ The service-learning programs that are compared to the "essential elements" were selected by the participating school districts and recognized as the "exemplary models" of service-learning within those school districts.

11 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SERVICE-LEARNING PRACTICE

NATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING COOPERATIVE

CLUSTER I: LEARNING

Essential Element 1: Effective service-learning establishes clear educational goals that require the application of concepts, content and skills from the academic disciplines and involves students in the construction of their knowledge.

The service-learning projects that demonstrate “clear educational goals” and are associated with specific “academic disciplines” have a committed teacher(s) who makes this connection happen. In the ideal case, the teacher also works with his/her students to identify these connections and requests the students’ help in constructing the projects that will meet these educational goals and enhance student learning.

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) requires that all service-learning projects must connect to the students’ academic curriculum. This is achieved by assigning each student, who is conducting an individual project, a Project Mentor.¹⁶ The Project Mentor is responsible for guiding the development and implementation of the student’s project, and assisting the student in connecting the project to at least one academic subject. Students working on a group project, as a class, work with their classroom teacher to make connections between their project and the course curriculum. Philadelphia teachers are also provided with a CD-ROM that outlines academic disciplines and the corresponding educational standards. The CD is extremely helpful to teachers as they construct service-learning projects and link them to their course curricula.

Although there are very few service-learning projects that connect to the curriculum in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the few that have a connection are coordinated by the teacher. One environmental science class works with a local community-based organization to study the wetlands of Chicago, plant new flora to help ensure the sustainability of the ecosystem, and learn how to care for the environment. Even though the community-based partner provides the service opportunity and a majority of the learning experience, the teacher helps students to make connections between their project and their classroom learning. The teacher still considers the service component as an “extra,” as the students work in the wetlands on weekends and none of the service factors into student grades, but she does recognize that the project will contribute and possibly enhance her students’ learning.

Overall, Element 1 is not being achieved in Chicago Public Schools. The CPS requirement does not call for projects to contain “clear educational goals,” but it does suggest that projects have “academic connections.” This suggestion, combined with the mandate that all service-learning projects must happen in “out-of-class” time, presents a

¹⁶ The Project Mentor can be a faculty member or community partner and is selected based on the student’s topic and content standards. The student and Project Mentor are expected to meet regularly.

quandary to the schools. Within the schools, teachers are the individuals who make the connection between service and the curriculum. However, Chicago teachers do not feel a responsibility to make these connections, as a majority of the projects are completed through community-based organizations in out-of-school time. Most teachers are unaware of students' service-learning projects and view them as extra-curricular, not an academic component of the curriculum. In fact, two of the participating Chicago high schools report that "none of the teachers at [their] school are involved with service-learning."

The CPS District office coordinated an effort in the 1999-2000 school year to create sample curricula for each academic discipline in the hope of encouraging more curriculum-connected service-learning projects. Eleven high school teachers, with years of service-learning experience, developed curriculum for Social Studies, English, Math, Science, Art and Education to Career courses. Although a good effort, teachers simply do not consider this service-learning requirement their responsibility and, therefore, are not using these curricula.

Essential Element 2: In effective service-learning, students are engaged in tasks that challenge and stretch them cognitively and developmentally.

A majority of the CPS service-learning programs are designed and coordinated by a community-based organization. Student roles and responsibilities are defined by those agencies as well. Coaches seem to possess only a general knowledge of the sites, activities and tasks in which students participate. The quality of projects, and as a result the tasks, varies tremendously and on average there is very little monitoring of student tasks at all.

Coaches report that student tasks range from "leading and developing an entire service project" to "balloon handling in the Chicago Christmas parade." Some service-learning projects do have meaningful roles, responsibilities and tasks for student participants, but this is by no means ensured and the students who happen to choose high-quality programs, happen to get high-quality and challenging tasks. For example, coaches and students who are involved with established community agencies with specific service-learning programs, such as Do Something and the American Red Cross, report that students are challenged and stretched "cognitively and developmentally." In fact, both organizations include specific learning objectives within their program design and aim to challenge students in their academic learning and personal development. However, this is unfortunately not the norm. Many coaches also articulated that most of their students are involved with "community service" activities and some of the most popular service projects are "one-shot-deals." For example, last fall, groups of Chicago students passed out water to the runners in the Chicago Marathon and this year several students have reported participating in walk-a-thons for various charities. Although noble gestures, these one-day, or even one-hour, service experiences allow very little time for participants to be challenged in their work or to grow academically and/or socially.

A goal of the School District of Philadelphia is to develop students' skills such as critical thinking and team building through service-learning projects. The District also states that it is their intention for all service-learning projects to be either student-driven and connected to students' learning with the guidance of a Project Mentor, or coordinated by a teacher who directly connects the project to the curriculum. With these goals as guiding principles and with teacher commitment, the District hopes to ensure project "quality control" and to create projects that challenge students both cognitively and developmentally.

The Philadelphia teachers, within the selected "best practice" schools, feel that their students have been challenged by the service-learning projects and report impacts such as increased academic achievement and gains in self-esteem.¹⁷ There were also no "one-shot-deal" service experiences reported by these teachers.¹⁸ Instead, service-learning projects are purposely designed for and implemented over longer periods of time to help ensure that students are indeed challenged by their tasks and learning goals are achieved. However, these teachers also articulated their concern regarding the quality of students' experiences in schools other than the "best practice" sites and felt that their situation was perhaps not the norm throughout the District.

Essential Element 3: In effective service-learning, assessment is used as a way to enhance student learning as well as to document and evaluate how well students have met content and skills standards.

Teachers within the School District of Philadelphia report using various methods of assessment that both enhance student learning and document what is being learned. Everything from tests and essays, to artwork and theatrical performances are used as means of assessment. Teachers also report using "self-assessments" and "peer-assessments" in addition to their personal evaluation of student work. These various assessments are documented and included in student portfolios, which are eventually used by the District to evaluate the student's overall achievement of the service requirement. The portfolio is intended to provide a summary of "student work, academic development and personal growth." The District also encourages, as stated in the published policy materials, that each service-learning project culminate in an oral presentation which will allow students the opportunity to display their acquired knowledge to a public audience.

An assessment team of at least two teachers, determined by the SLC, evaluates and grades the student projects. The District has outlined "performance indicators" (Appendix K), which are used in the assessment of each project. If service-learning

¹⁷ Every individual interviewed in this study reported that an "increase in self-esteem" was a direct result of participating in a quality service-learning experience.

¹⁸ Many students do serve on days such as Martin Luther King Day or Youth Service Day, but these "one day" service experiences are only a part of larger, more intensive project. They are not the entire service experience.

projects are interdisciplinary and woven into the curriculum of various classes, the students are able to receive credit for the projects in each class that the project involves. For example, if a Science and English teacher collaborate on a water-testing project, the field work students complete would be integrated into their science grades and writing assignments would count toward their English grades. Achievement of the requirement will be recorded on a student's report card.

Teachers who have embraced assessment and are comfortable with evaluating their service-learning programs, also report that they have received training regarding assessment and evaluation from their Cluster Office or the District. Cluster Coordinators have found that the more experienced service-learning teachers feel the most comfortable with assessment and are now exploring creative avenues to assess impacts. Coordinators are encouraging those teachers to "mentor" newer teachers and assist them with evaluation and assessment.

Service-learning assessment, within the exemplary programs of Philadelphia, is beginning to reach a new level. As Philadelphia teachers discussed assessment, the lines between achieving skill standards, enhancing student learning and conducting reflection activities began to blur. For example, one English teacher assigned her students an essay asking them to write about their service experience and the course content learned. This essay enhanced student learning as they processed what they had been learning within the class, gave them a chance to reflect on their service experience and also met some of the content and skills standards regarding essay writing for this particular English class.

There is very little assessment of service-learning programs within the Chicago Public Schools. Most school personnel are concentrating their efforts on involving students within the initiative and recruiting community service sites. The Chicago Panel on School Policy found that the ratio of 9th and 10th graders to service-learning coaches is 852 to 1.¹⁹ This being the case, coaches find very little time to create and conduct proper assessments of all the service activities within the school community. The District does provide coaches with a basic assessment tool regarding the service sites (Appendix C), but few schools report using the form.

Overall, assessment of student service-learning activities is not stressed by CPS or by individual school administration. The service-learning requirement states that service is to be done in out-of-school time, and administrators and teachers often view service activities as "extra-curricular." Few teachers are directly involved in service-learning activities and those who are do not factor the service experiences into students' academic grades. It would seem that teachers feel very little urgency to assess what, if anything, students are learning from their experiences. In short, service-learning is not yet embraced by CPS educators as a method to meet "content and skills standards."

¹⁹ Debra Williams, *Schools say no time for service learning*, Catalyst, April 1999: 4.

CLUSTER II: SERVICE

Essential Element 4: Students are engaged in service tasks that have clear goals, meet genuine needs in the school or community and have significant consequences for themselves and others.

Throughout the service-learning requirement literature, CPS declares, “Service projects should meet real community needs.” Most service-learning coaches and students feel that they are, indeed, accomplishing this objective. All of the coaches reported that their students are fulfilling “genuine needs” in the community through their service projects, whether students are tutoring in elementary schools, cleaning up playgrounds or doing office work for a non-profit. Coaches have described service activities that are far from the service-learning ideal, such as answering phones, filing or cleaning for local agencies that cannot afford paid help. Although not service-learning, the coaches maintain that those activities, no matter how unglamorous, are contributing to the community and teaching students how to “give back” to society.

Again, the majority of CPS students are placed at off-campus sites and join pre-determined service projects or fulfill specific staff roles for community-based organizations (CBOs). Only one teacher described working through a community needs assessment with his students, allowing the students to choose which issue to address, and then assisting them in the design of an appropriate service project. This teacher uses the Active Citizenship Today (ACT) curriculum and also received training from the Constitutional Rights Foundation regarding implementation of the program.

The more intensive service-learning programs in Chicago, which are all run by community-based organizations, clarify the goals and potential impact of the service activities for student participants. The American Red Cross (ARC) currently works with two Chicago high schools offering students the opportunity to serve as community instructors for HIV/AIDS programs, Community Disaster Education, Children’s Safety or First Aid and CPR. ARC outlines the objectives and goals of the program for students within their literature and during the program orientation. Students are aware of the goals of the program and the positive consequences of their services. Unfortunately, not all students get this experience. In fact, only 30 students (approximately) in Chicago work with the American Red Cross. Other high-quality programs coordinated by community-based agencies, such as Do Something, also report working with only a small number of schools due to limited resources (e.g. staff and funding).

Many of the service-learning projects in Philadelphia classrooms begin with a community needs assessment. Students, with the guidance of their teacher or a community partner, assess the needs of their community, establish project goals and objectives, define roles and responsibilities, and design a service project to address one of the identified needs. In addition to classroom-based needs assessments, one cluster coordinates student focus groups throughout their middle and high schools to define community needs. The Youth Driven Service-Learning Center (YDSLCL) of the Simon Gratz Cluster, coordinated by students in Simon Gratz High School, organize the focus groups, collect the data and then

distribute the results to teachers and students who use the information to develop appropriate projects.

The service-learning elective courses, offered by various Philadelphia high schools, are pre-determined service experiences for the students, rather than entirely student-driven. However, these structured courses still provide students with a high-quality service-learning experience, as they have clear goals, “significant consequences” or impacts on participants, and have been created to fulfill a genuine need in the community.

Essential Element 5: Effective service-learning employs formative and summative evaluation in a systematic evaluation of the service effort and its outcomes.

A majority of the evaluation, in both Chicago and Philadelphia schools, focuses on “service effort,” rather than “service outcomes.” Schools record the number of student service hours and/or concentrate their evaluation efforts on student learning or impacts on participants. There is little evidence of evaluation of service outcomes or the effects of the service activities within the community. Some community partners, such as Do Something and City Year, report conducting their own evaluation of their service-learning programs. However, this is strictly by their own initiative and is not facilitated by the school districts.

Project Evaluation

Service hours are the only indicator of the service effort and its service outcomes in Chicago.

CPS has designed four basic tools to assess the “service effort” of the students: a service time sheet, a student evaluation, an agency evaluation, and a verification of project completion. The service-learning coach is responsible for collecting these materials and keeping a record of the students’ progress toward completing the 40 hour requirement.

Students are responsible for recording their service hours on a time sheet throughout the project. At the completion of the project, both the student and the partner agency fill out evaluations of the program and service experience (Appendix C and D). The students also submit a project completion form to the school coach, which is signed and verified by their teacher-mentor (Appendix E). Students accumulate service hours, that will be reflected in each student’s official transcript.

Although CPS stresses service-learning, there is no formal assessment of whether or not student service hours are spent on community service projects or service-learning projects. The teacher-mentors and coaches have been charged with the responsibility of making this determination on their own, but there are currently no district standards for the projects.

Each student in Philadelphia is responsible for documenting his or her project, whether he/she has participated in an individual project or a group project, by creating a portfolio. The portfolio is intended to provide a summary of “student work, academic development and personal growth” and includes materials such as essays, art work and progress reports. Teachers report using numerous evaluation methods (e.g. tests, essays, journal writing, art and oral presentations) throughout the projects to assess both student learning and service efforts, which are documented and included in the student portfolios. The portfolios will eventually be used by the District to evaluate the student’s overall achievement of the service requirement.

Initiative Evaluation

CPS contracted Professor Joseph Kahne of Mills College, Oakland, CA (formerly of University of Illinois at Chicago), to conduct *The Chicago Public Schools Service Learning Initiative: A Formative and Summative Evaluation*, during the first year of the requirement. Data collected included interviews and observations at ten schools, surveys completed by the service coach at each school, and surveys completed by 268 students who participated in a broad array of programs. The evaluation examined whether the CPS service-learning initiative was moving in a productive direction, rather than assessing whether or not the program was fully implemented.

Kahne concluded that the ultimate impact, or outcomes, of the Chicago service-learning requirement cannot yet be assessed, but the “first year of the initiative appeared to be quite successful.” The initiative generated a number of new partnerships between schools and the community, and many service-learning experiences have been created for students during the past year. Kahne recommended that CPS concentrate second year efforts on teacher involvement and professional development, as well as increasing the number of student participants within the initiative, “if the quantity of service-learning programs does not grow dramatically, many students’ plans for graduation may be compromised.” The challenge for CPS now becomes increasing the number of *high-quality* service-learning opportunities. If quality programs are not maintained, the overall district service-learning initiative will most likely have little impact.

A district-wide assessment of the service-learning initiative in the School District of Philadelphia is currently being discussed and developed. Student portfolios will serve as an initial indicator of student participation, types of service projects completed and student learning. Through the use of portfolios, the District reports that approximately 25,000 students (K-12) have participated in service-learning activities to date.

CLUSTER III: CRITICAL COMPONENTS THAT SUPPORT LEARNING & SERVICE

Essential Element 6: Effective service-learning seeks to maximize student voice in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating the service project.

“Maximizing student voice” is a difficult element to assess. The definition of “maximize” changes with every program and every individual within a program.

CPS has established a policy requiring students to work with an established community agency. However, students get to “choose” their service site. Some may feel this is little to no student voice, but within the established system, it could be viewed as maximum student voice. CPS and coaches encourage students to think about their personal and even professional interests when choosing a service site, but this is often the only opportunity for CPS students to offer their thoughts and opinions. There is little evidence that student voice is incorporated into the design or evaluation of service-learning projects, as the programs and/or staff positions are pre-determined by the CBO.

The elective courses in Philadelphia utilize student voice by allowing students the choice to enroll in the course. However, the District highlights the role of student voice throughout the service-learning process and encourages teachers to integrate student voice whenever possible, rather than only during the course registration process. The “veteran” teachers seem more comfortable with this and report that student voice is used throughout the service-learning process, including the design, implementation and assessment of projects.

Newer teachers report struggling with “relinquishing control” of the class and course content to the students and only incorporate student voice to a certain extent (i.e. their own comfort level). These teachers also admit to not “maximizing” student voice. One teacher, in her second year of teaching, noted encouraging her students to address certain issues or needs through “creative manipulation.” She limits discussion to certain topic areas and attempts to guide her students towards projects with which she is also comfortable. She hopes to give students even more freedom with service-learning in the future, once she is “more comfortable with the teaching method.”

Essential Element 7: Effective service-learning values diversity, through its participants, its practice and its outcomes.

Both school districts are achieving diversity on all levels. The requirements affect the entire student population, K-12 in Philadelphia and the high school population of Chicago, and both districts boast a variety of project topics, such as health, literacy, environment, teen parenting, violence prevention and peer mediation.

Essential Element 8: Effective service-learning promotes communication and interaction with the community and encourages partnerships and collaboration.

This is the one element with which Chicago has enjoyed the most success. Since the implementation of the requirement, there has been a dramatic increase in community/school interaction throughout the school district. Over 150 agencies have identified themselves as potential service partners for schools and their contact information is listed in the “coach’s kit” provided by the District Office. Coaches have the full responsibility for recruiting, establishing and maintaining partnerships. Schools report working with an average of 50 community partners, not all of which are included in the 150 CBOs outlined by the school district.

During the second year of the requirement, CPS coordinated a service-learning “fair” for Chicago high schools and CBOs. The purpose of the fair was to help facilitate more community/school partnerships. The fair was well attended, but many teachers and coaches maintain that they have more success recruiting and forming relationships with local CBOs (i.e. community agencies within close proximity of their school) through their own initiative. To supplement the fair, coaches would like CPS to provide training regarding the development of school/agency partnerships.

Many coaches report feeling pressure from CPS and their school administration to have their students start collecting service hours, and this is greatly affecting the quality of their community partnerships. Students are being placed at sites where coaches have never visited or even spoken with agency personnel. With 852 students to one coach, it is extremely difficult to monitor all partnerships or maintain effective communication with all of the partner sites. Many coaches place students at a site and then “just wait to see what happens” or “trust that they are doing good things” with the agency.

Philadelphia also reports experiencing an increase in partnerships between schools and community-based organizations, since the graduation requirement was introduced. The District secured some partnerships at the launch of the requirement, including City Year, the National School and Community Corps, and the Center for Greater Philadelphia. These “district partners” work at numerous schools assisting administrators and teachers with the implementation of service-learning. Post-Secondary Resource Coordinators (PSRCs) are charged with the responsibility of acting as a liaison between the schools and community agencies, and assisting with partnership building. The coordinators also provide teacher training focused on partnership building and community agency recruitment.

Teachers also report recruiting their own community partners once their students decide on a community issue to address. After the students select the topic of their service-learning project, the teacher recruits community members to assist with project design, including coordination, implementation, course content and training. Within most partnerships CBOs provide curriculum for specific subject areas, such as literacy

education, and training for students and teachers. CBOs have also been reported to provide additional resources such as transportation and even funding.

The School District of Philadelphia encourages school/community partnerships predominantly through the recruitment of community agencies and teacher trainings. The District personnel are committed to fostering more partnerships, maintaining that the highest quality service-learning programs in the school district have strong community partnerships. The District also stated that they encourage schools to work toward a true collaboration with CBOs, wherein the teacher and CBO staff member become partners or co-teachers of the service-learning project.

For more on school/community partnership, see page 53.

Essential Element 9: Students are prepared for all aspects of their service work including a clear understanding of task and role, the skills and information required by the task, awareness of safety precautions, as well as knowledge about sensitivity to the people with whom they will be working.

At least one teacher is involved in every service-learning project in Philadelphia and they are responsible for preparing their students for service. Most teachers coordinate preparation activities within the classroom, but bring in community-based agency staff to assist with training. Teachers report that numerous CBOs have conducted trainings, both for students and teachers, in health, safety, literacy, tutoring and environmental issues. Most of the agency partners are regarded as “experts” in the area in which they train and bring additional information, resources and energy to the projects.

The majority of service project preparation in Chicago occurs with the partner agency and is conducted at the partner site. Coaches report that all students receive some sort of training; however, these trainings range from an introduction to office staff and overview of responsibilities, to the ten week leadership training offered by Do Something. Again, due to the sheer number of students that each coach is responsible for, coaches struggle to keep track of all “preparation” activities and none of the coaches report any assessment of student preparation or training activities which occur at the service sites.

Although unaware of most service preparation at the sites, some coaches provide students with a brief orientation to the service-learning initiative. These coaches visit each class at the beginning of the school year and review the requirement and student responsibilities/expectations. One coach designed a 45-minute course outlining service-learning, the requirement and the service sites available to students.

Essential Element 10: Student reflection takes place before during and after service, uses multiple methods that encourage critical thinking, and is a central force in the design and fulfillment of curricular objectives.

While student preparation happens at the service site, reflection predominantly happens in the Chicago schools and is the responsibility of the service-learning coach. Coaches report that the most popular tool for reflection is through writing assignments. One high school requires that every student write a one-page “reflection essay” describing his or her service experience at the end of their program. Whether they were involved in a one-day service activity or semester long activity, students must submit an essay to the coach to receive credit for those hours. Most of the schools require students to keep a service journal in which they are to record the type of project they were involved in, the dates and hours which they participated in the project and their feelings regarding their experience. These reflection activities are predominantly used as another indicator for the coaches that students completed their service hours, rather than for analysis, synthesis or assessment of experiences. And one service-learning coach felt that “reflection was not critical to the program” and the students were not mandated to complete any type of reflection activities.

Philadelphia teachers recognize reflection as an integral component of service-learning and utilize reflection activities to achieve multiple objectives. Reflection is used to enhance and strengthen learning, the service experience and assessment. Teachers report using various reflection activities, some assigned and some student-created, including essays, art work, poetry, oral presentations, skits and tests. Teachers feel that these types of reflection activities augment their curricula, facilitate students’ comprehension of subject matter and allow students the opportunity for personal reflection on their service experiences.

Essential Element 11: Multiple methods are designed to acknowledge, celebrate and further validate students’ service work.

In addition to preparation, action and reflection, celebration is viewed as the other integral component to service-learning projects in Philadelphia. Every teacher described a celebratory activity at the conclusion of their service-learning projects and most celebrations were designed by the students. There is also a great deal of celebration happening at the Cluster level, including award ceremonies which recognize all participating students, parents, teachers and community-based partners.

Within Chicago’s requirement, service-learning is defined as consisting of three components: preparation, action and reflection. “Celebration” is not noted as a critical component, nor is it happening within many service programs. In fact the only reference to celebration within the CPS service-learning materials suggests that schools “recognize students who have completed the project and those who put in extra hours.”

During the second year of the Chicago requirement, many coaches created service-learning T-shirts and/or certificates to recognize their students who have completed the 40 hour requirement. The few teachers who conduct service-learning activities within their courses, celebrate their students' efforts by keeping photo journals of the projects or coordinating a class party to celebrate student work. However, most celebratory activities in the schools are concentrated on the completion of the entire requirement (40 hours) rather than at the completion of each project.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Eleven Essential Elements of Effective Service-Learning Practice* provides a standard against which to judge service-learning programs and policies. By comparing the Chicago initiative to this standard, it is clear that Chicago Public Schools has designed and implemented a "community service" requirement, rather than service-learning. An hours-based requirement, which restricts service activities to out-of-school time, combined with little teacher training, has resulted primarily in community service projects.

That combination (hours-based, out-of-school time, no training) has also caused teachers to feel little to no obligation or responsibility to be involved in the initiative. Service-learning is primarily viewed as "extra-curricular," rather than as an effective teaching strategy for the classroom. This lack of teacher buy-in has manifested itself in various ways, and resulted in: 1) few service projects having curriculum connections; 2) no real assessment of student learning or community impact; and 3) a reliance on community-based organizations to provide Chicago high school students (all 98,000) with appropriate service experiences.

However, this is not to say that CPS cannot move toward service-learning from this base of community service. There are quality programs within some of the "best practices" high schools and some teachers appear to be adopting service into their academic curricula. Community agencies have also been willing and eager to partner with schools on various projects. CPS needs to use this base as a starting point, revise the current graduation requirement (e.g. allow service-learning to take place during school hours), and implement a comprehensive teacher training strategy, in order to achieve the district's outlined service-learning goals.

The comparison of the Philadelphia service-learning initiative to the Eleven Essential Elements has generated a much different story than that of Chicago. The School District of Philadelphia appears to have established a solid service-learning policy and has begun to reap some quality results. The District focused on designing a more "teacher-driven movement" by making the requirement project-based, in-school time and focusing on teacher training for the first two years of implementation. This strategy has proven to be rather successful; however, the teachers within the "best practices" high schools caution that there are only a limited number of high-quality service-learning programs within the school district, and there is still much work to be done. As one teacher explained, the

District must “continue to concentrate on teacher training,” particularly in those schools that have yet to implement any service-learning projects, and work to broaden “the knowledge base of service-learning” within Philadelphia. With continuous training and gradual implementation, Philadelphia should continue to generate quality results.